

# LDF

*Building on Success*

## **Shopfront Design Guidelines**

Supplementary Planning Document

Local Development Framework

Adopted 25 November 2011



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
KENSINGTON  
AND CHELSEA



# 1

## Introduction

**1.0.1** The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is an area of outstanding historic and architectural interest. The built environment offers a rich and diverse range of architectural styles that for the most part exhibit the Royal Borough's Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian heritage.

**1.0.2** Shopfronts within the Borough play a key part in establishing and defining the visual character of our high streets and shopping parades. The Borough has many fine examples of shopfront design ranging from the mid-nineteenth century through to today. The preservation of these early examples is important for maintaining our highly valued built heritage and links with the past, however emphasis should also be placed on ensuring high standards of design for all shopfronts, be they traditional, modernist or contemporary (as defined in this document) in style.

**1.0.3** The architectural merit of buildings and the collective townscape qualities of the street can be eroded by poor quality alterations or the unsympathetic replacement of shopfronts. This Design Guide is intended to require greater care to be taken in shopfront design in order to maintain the character and appearance of traditional shopfronts, and to improve the quality of new shopfront designs so they respect and enhance their surroundings. In addition, this Design Guide also explains how improved access can be satisfactorily incorporated into shopfront design.

### 1.1 PURPOSE

**1.1.1** This Design Guide is a Supplementary Planning Document on the design of shopfronts within the Royal Borough. This guidance is applicable to shopfronts in

the general sense, including the frontages of restaurants, public houses, banks, estate agents and other similar uses which occupy the ground floor of buildings. It is relevant to all shopfronts within the Royal Borough.

**1.1.2** This Design Guide will ensure that shopfronts throughout the Borough contribute positively to the identity and quality of our built heritage and streetscapes. High-quality shopfronts will be required in all our town centres, high streets and shopping parades. As required by Policy CL2 of the Core Strategy, shopfronts must be of the highest architectural and urban design quality, taking opportunities to improve the quality and character of buildings and the area and the way it functions.

**1.1.3** This document does not promote any particular style or act as a blueprint from which specific designs may be taken. The principal aim is to provide design guidance to enable applicants to sensitively restore, modify or construct new shopfronts. It does not however, remove the need for skilled professional architectural advice.

**1.1.4** This Design Guide provides supplementary detail to relevant policies contained within the 'Renewing the Legacy' section of the adopted Core Strategy which relate to 'conservation, enhancement and design quality' within the Royal Borough. Policies CL2 (n) and (o) specifically refer to shopfronts, and state the following:

**Policy CL2 (n):** Require alterations to existing shopfronts to preserve those elements that contribute to their traditional character, such as corbels, part-glazed doors, fascia, glazing bars, pilaster and stallrisers.

**Policy CL2 (o):** Require new, and alterations to existing shopfronts, to:

- i. respect the building's original framework
- ii. have a positive visual impact on the appearance of the building or streetscene
- iii. respect the character the building in relation to siting and design of awnings and blinds
- iv. be inclusive for all
- v. provide independent access to upper floor accommodation.

**1.1.4** The majority of shopfront alterations, including the removal of old shopfronts and the installation of signage and advertisements will require permission. Policy CR4 of the adopted Core Strategy deals with advertisements and signage. Shopfronts located within listed buildings will also require Listed Building Consent. Part 5.1 of this document provides further details regarding necessary planning approvals.

## 2

### Shopfront Styles

**2.0.1** Shopfronts are subject to substantial change over time and are one of the most variable aspects of our built environment. The Royal Borough has an extensive range of shopfront designs that display the variety of architectural styles and building trends/technology that have occurred since the principal development of shopping streets which began in the mid to late nineteenth century.

**2.0.2** The most common approaches to shopfront design within the Royal Borough can be broadly classified into three main styles which reflect the period in which they were designed and constructed. These are discussed below.

#### **2.1 TRADITIONAL SHOPFRONTS**

**2.1.1** From the mid to late nineteenth century through to the early twentieth century, the style of the majority of 'traditional' shopfronts was based on classical design.

**2.1.2** This classical design approach approximated shopfront design with the constituent parts of a classical building: namely the plinth, column and entablature. This particular style was successful in achieving a balanced relationship between the shopfront and the building as a whole.

**2.1.3** This approach to shopfront design proved very robust, and allowed a degree of flexibility to accommodate variations in glazing extent, fascia size and orientation, and console placement that took place between the Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian

periods without adversely affecting the overall composition of the shopfront, building or streetscene.

**2.1.4** Common materials used on traditional shopfronts included brick, render and terracotta, with glass and timber windows. Brass, lead and iron were used for hanging signage and ornamentation.

## **2.2 MODERNIST SHOPFRONTS**

**2.2.1** Modernist shopfront design (approximately 1920s - 1960s) embraced advances in glass technology and a wider palette of materials such as marble, neon, aluminium and chrome. More emphasis was placed on the extensive use of glazing to showcase an increasing amount of merchandise available for sale and display.

**2.2.2** Department stores also made an appearance during this period. These shopfronts accentuated the trend for large, open shop displays and incorporated the use of electric lighting and reflectors to make window displays more attractive.

**2.2.3** The standardisation of shopfronts began during this period to promote corporate identity and encourage brand loyalty in their customers. This approach saved on design costs with many companies employing their own in-house architects to do this work.

**2.2.4** Fashionable styles during the modernist era include Beaux-Arts, Neo-Georgian and Art Deco, however there was a general move towards more minimalist design.

## **2.3** CONTEMPORARY SHOPFRONTS

**2.3.1** Contemporary shopfronts exhibit a broad range of styles and appearances due to the range of materials, expertise and technology available to them. Fully glazed frontages and doors are popular features of contemporary shopfronts, which enable them to fully showcase their merchandise.

**2.3.2** Aside from the display of merchandise, there is also further emphasis on the visibility, branding and creative design of the shopfront itself.

**2.3.3** This has given rise to shopfront designs that seek to compete not only in the display of their goods and services but also in terms of their own eye-catching ability. These shopfronts are sometimes installed with little consideration of their relationship to the building in which they are located or the remainder of the streetscene. This is particularly an issue when they are located in historic buildings or other sensitive locations.

# 3

## Shopfront Design Guidelines

**3.0.1** This section provides design guidelines for the restoration, modification and construction of shopfronts. The format of these guidelines is as follows:

- **Shopfront Design Principles**

These are the fundamental considerations of shopfront design. They draw heavily from a contextual design approach and the need for a commitment to high quality design solutions.

- **Desired Outcomes**

These set out the desired outcomes sought by the Council with regard to shopfronts, from the need to retain traditional shopfronts to achieving energy efficiency.

- **Specific Guidance**

This provides guidance on specific elements of shopfront design, and involves how to treat individual or collective features of a shopfront in an acceptable manner.

- **How to Approach Shopfront Design**

This section provides guidance on how to go about designing and obtaining planning approvals for shopfronts.

## **3.1 SHOPFRONT DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

**3.1.1** These shopfront design principles provide a good starting point when contemplating a new or replacement shopfront irrespective of whether they are located in traditional or recent buildings.

### **3.1.1 (a) The Streetscene and Local Context**

New designs should not draw attention away from, or dominate the streetscene and existing buildings.

It is important to consider the effect of the shopfront design on the rest of the street and the immediate area. Proportions, materials and details should maintain the rhythm, character and hierarchy of existing buildings along the street. The more uniform the street, the more shopfronts should conform to the symmetry of the facades.

### **3.1.1 (b) The Building as a Whole**

Sensitive design should enhance the individuality and character of the building.

It is important to consider the effect of shopfront design on the whole building, and adjoining shopfronts. The architectural character and proportions of the upper floors should be understood to ensure the ground floor is not designed in isolation. The structural integrity of the frontage to buildings should be maintained. Open shopfronts are generally not acceptable.

### **3.1.1 (c) The Shopfront**

Shopfronts should have their own individual style while respecting the form and scale of the building above them and the facades to either side.

Individual shopfronts should be consistent with the rhythm and harmony of the street while still providing visual interest. Taking into account adjoining facades is important particularly if the shopfront property in question is part of a large architectural group of buildings with identifiable character. In such circumstances the shopfront will need to be in character with the shopfronts in the remainder of the group.

### **3.1.1 (d) The Details**

The design of details should not take place in isolation from the building and streetscene.

Special care in the design of entrances, windows, signs, ornaments and their associated materials along with their colour palette is important. Attention to detail is important in the execution of quality design.

### **3.1.1 (e) Accessibility**

Function and ease of use for all is a primary consideration.

It makes economic sense for shopfronts to be accessible to all. Where existing shopfronts do not provide satisfactory access, improvements should be explored to resolve such problems. New shopfronts should always where practicable, provide direct and straightforward access to their premises.

## 3.2 DESIRED OUTCOMES

**3.2.1** The following desired outcomes are envisaged by this Design Guide. It is expected that the principles and specific guidance measures will assist with achieving these.

- **A High Standard of Design for All Shopfronts**

**3.2.2** All shopfronts whether in new developments or within existing buildings should contribute positively to the character and visual quality of their surroundings.

- **The Retention of Good Examples of Traditional Shopfronts**

**3.2.3** Where historic shopfronts exist, special care should be taken to ensure they are preserved. Where an existing shopfront contributes to the character and visual amenity of the building or area, it should be kept rather than replaced even when the use of the premises has changed from the original.

- **The Retention of Architectural and Traditional Shopfront Features**

**3.2.4** Important and traditional architectural features on buildings should not be destroyed or concealed by the installation of new shopfronts. Encouragement will be given to the reinstatement of missing features. Should a new shopfront be proposed, it should respect the building and shopfront's original framework.

- **Sensitivity to Qualities of Listed Buildings and the Character and Appearance of Conservation Areas**

**3.2.5** Alterations to shopfronts within listed buildings will require skill and care in order to avoid damage to historic structures and to ensure new additions are in keeping with the character of the building and setting. Similarly shopfronts in conservation areas will need to demonstrate an understanding of their impact on the character and appearance of the wider conservation area. In both cases (listed

buildings and conservation areas), the preservation and enhancement of these buildings and areas is paramount, and shopfronts will be considered in terms of how well they uphold these values.

- **Maintaining and Providing Independent Access to Upper Floors**

**3.2.6** The lack of independent access to the upper floors of a building can inhibit their usability and render them redundant. To ensure the viability of upper floors and their availability to a wider range of occupants, independent access is a necessity. Existing independent access should be retained and the Council will require the reinstatement of independent access in new and replacement shopfronts.

- **A High Standard of Design Quality and Materials**

**3.2.7** All shopfront proposals will be expected to exhibit a high standard in design and choice of materials, irrespective of whether the design is traditional or contemporary. The emphasis must always be on quality and these considerations will be of importance in determining any shopfront application. By their nature shopfronts are viewed from close range as well as from a distance. As a result, the design of each component as well as the overall appearance is important.

- **Providing Accessible Shopfronts**

**3.2.8** The shopfront should provide direct and straightforward access to the premises for users of all abilities through the principal entrance to the principal active floorspace inside the premises, without the need for specialist or separate provision.

New shopfronts should be designed to be accessible for disabled people. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Supplementary Planning Document: Access

Design Guide Adopted 2010 provides further detail in relation to designing accessible environments.

- **Achieving Energy Efficiency and Green Building Standards**

**3.2.9** Reducing energy consumption and operating costs of buildings is important. Designs that embrace such measures are encouraged. It is acknowledged that many of these measures are outside the remit of planning control. Over 50 per cent of all energy consumed in the UK is the result of the design and construction of buildings and their use. Particular considerations to bear in mind include:

- the extent of glazing used on shop windows
- the use of air curtains
- illumination levels (signage and interior)
- air conditioning
- the use of open refrigeration units.

**3.2.10** Measures to reduce energy consumption might also include the introduction of double glazing and the use of materials which involve less energy to produce, such as timber (which involves a small fraction of the amount required to produce the equivalent in aluminium for example).

- **Ensure Signs and Advertisements are Kept to a Minimum and Co-ordinate with the Overall Shop Design and Streetscene**

**3.2.11** The content of signs should generally be kept to a minimum. Fascia signs should typically only contain the name of the trader and street number. If necessary the nature of the trade may also be indicated. Excessive signage, superfluous

content on signage, as well as profuse advertisements and posters whether on the shopfront or adjacent walls, fences or railings result in shopfronts appearing cluttered and are unwelcome.

### **3.3** SPECIFIC GUIDANCE

#### **3.3.1** Shopfronts in Traditional Buildings

**3.3.1.1** The following sections consider in turn, each of the components of traditional shopfront design. Where these exist or where a new shopfront is proposed in a traditional building, they should conform to the following guidance.

##### **The Shopfront Surround or Frame**

**3.3.1.2** Traditional shopfronts establish a general framework within which variations on the design and arrangement of doors, glazing, materials and colours can occur.

**3.3.1.3** This framework typically consists of pilasters either side of a shopfront that are crowned by a corbel. These establish the outer edges of a shopfront. A fascia connects the top of these vertical elements.

**3.3.1.4** Where the traditional framework of the shop remains, these features should be retained (and restored if necessary) and a new shopfront design incorporated within it.

When shop units are combined, the individuality established by this framework should still be retained in order to maintain the proportions of the shopfront and building(s). A fascia should never stretch uninterrupted across a number of distinct buildings or architectural units.

## Fascias

**3.3.1.5** Fascias are perhaps the most noticeable feature of the shopfront. They play a dual role in both communicating the name, trade and number of the shop and forming an important design element in the 'framework' of the shopfront.

**3.3.1.6** Fascias complete the shopfront and distinguish it from the upper floors of a building. The following specific guidance relate to the size and siting of fascias:

The depth of the fascia should be in scale with the other elements of the building.

The fascia should not extend below the head of the pilaster or above the perceived floor level below the first floor windows. Corbels attached to the pilasters have traditionally contained the fascia and also determined its height. Where corbels no longer exist, their reinstatement should be considered.

Windows and architectural details such as string courses, friezes, cornices and pilasters should not be obscured, altered or defaced by new fascias (likewise projecting signs or advertisements).

The use of large areas of acrylic or other shiny materials in fascias should be avoided. On a nineteenth century building a painted timber fascia is the most appropriate solution with either painted lettering or individual letters of another material.

Box fascias, which are usually constructed of plastic and/or metal that often project out of the existing fascia panel are too large, bulky and unsympathetic to the style of most buildings in the Royal Borough, and should not be used.

Highly reflective signage on fascias should be avoided. Exceptions may be made where Victorian painted glass fascias are being restored or faithfully copied. The most legible signs typically comprise simple lettering and good contrast. Traditionally fascias had painted letters on timber or affixed individual ceramic, timber or metal letters.

In some locations for example, Kensington High Street, blocks of Twentieth Century mansion blocks have shops on the ground floor with consistent flat fascias which have been designed to be free of advertising. This character should be respected.

## Pilasters

**3.3.1.7** The pilasters are half columns that project from the wall between each shop and provide support for consoles. They give a shopfront their vertical framing and also visually support the fascia and the upper floors of a building. As such they need to be of sufficient size and be appropriately located to achieve this.

**3.3.1.8** Pilasters should always be incorporated into the design of traditional shopfronts. The width of pilasters will vary between shopfronts, but will normally include a base, capital and/or console bracket. Where a new shopfront is proposed, they should not be obscured. The opportunity should be taken to reinstate missing pilasters where possible.

## Consoles/Corbels

**3.3.1.9** These are the brackets at each end of the fascia, which help to visually terminate the top of pilasters. The designs of these vary widely within the Royal Borough from neo-classical consoles formed like scrolls to art deco designs in the 1920s and 1930s.

**3.3.1.10** Consoles/Corbels are a feature of traditional shopfronts and should always be retained or restored.

## Stallrisers

**3.3.1.11** The stallriser forms a plinth at ground level creating a solid visual base for a building. It completes the shopfront by providing balanced proportions, reducing the dominance of glazing and providing some protection against accidental knocks. Traditionally the stallriser was part of the display table when shopfronts were completely open. This layout still exists in some shops (e.g greengrocers, fishmongers).

**3.3.1.12** Most traditional shopfronts had stallrisers made of render or wooden panelling on a rendered or stone plinth. The stallriser provides considerable emphasis to the base of the shopfront, presenting a robust structural element.

**3.3.1.13** In general stallrisers should not exceed the base of the pilasters (approximately 450mm in height or 18 ins) or the depth of the fascia, whichever is less.

**3.3.1.14** New and replacement shopfronts in traditional buildings should incorporate a stallriser. This will be pursued in instances where there is a preponderance of stallrisers within the parade in question. The choice of depth will depend on the

overall design and should be influenced by the depth of the fascia (in order to provide balance to the shopfront).

**3.3.1.15** Existing stallrisers with decorative features of quality should be retained.

### Glazing

**3.3.1.16** Large sheets of plate glass have been used in shopfronts since the mid-Victorian period, however smaller divisions of glazing have remained in use for many traditional shop designs.

**3.3.1.17** Glazing is divided by mullions and transoms in a grid pattern, which reflects the rest of the proportions of the shop and building. Unless a large expanse of glass is a principal feature of the design, this practice should be followed.

**3.3.1.18** Generally a transom should divide the window at the same level as the line between the door and the door light. Mullions should line up above and below the transom and may reflect vertical alignment of windows in the upper floors.

**3.3.1.19** Extensive areas of unrelieved glazing should be avoided as this creates the visual effect of a void at the base of a building.

### Doors on Shopfronts

**3.3.1.20** In traditional shopfronts, recessed doorways provide depth and relief to the shopfront, while also breaking down the scale of the facade. In some cases, the recess of the doorway is decorated with mosaics or tiles. Good quality examples of these should be retained. Where there is evidence of anti-social behaviour, doors which are flush with the shopfront may be the best option.

**3.3.1.21** The design of the entrance door must be integral with the design and layout of the whole shopfront. Painted timber, part-glazed doors are recommended for shop entrances: the material used and the finish should match that of the main shopfront frame. A solid panel at the base of a glazed door should be used and this should coincide with the line of the stallriser.

**3.3.1.22** Door furniture should be appropriate to the character of the door, shopfront and building. For traditional shopfront doors, brass is often preferred.

**3.3.1.23** Ensuring access for all is important, and Section 3.4 of this Design Guide should also be referred to.

### Doors to Upper Floors

**3.3.1.24** Independent access to upper floors is important. Where this is currently provided, shopfront design should respect its existence and encourage its use.

**3.3.1.25** The provision of independent access should be integrated into the overall shopfront design and a suitably different but complementary door appearance is appropriate. In most circumstances a solid, unglazed panelled door is suitable, however the chosen material and finish should relate to those used in the shopfront and overall building design. Access should preferably be recessed slightly from the front wall of the building to denote its secondary function along a retail street.

### Lettering

**3.3.1.26** Lettering should be part of the shopfront design and should respect the character of the building and the street.

**3.3.1.27** The size of lettering should be determined by the need to be reasonably legible to shoppers, but not to be too large to swamp the fascia or the shopfront. The

style of lettering can help to convey the image of the shop but should not conflict with the other elements of the buildings.

**3.3.1.28** Each shop must have its street number clearly displayed. Numbers can be positioned on the fascia, on glazing above doors or on the door itself.

## Materials

**3.3.1.29** Much of the character of the Borough is derived from the use of traditional materials including stucco, brick, stone and terracotta, with glass and timber windows. The widespread use of synthetic materials such as vinyl, perspex or glass reinforced plastic (GRP) is not appropriate.

**3.3.1.30** Materials should complement the character of the building and surrounds. As a general principle, the type and number of materials used should be kept to a minimum and should be durable and easy to maintain. Shiny, highly reflective materials such as plastics and acrylics or lurid colouring should be avoided.

**3.3.1.31** It is helpful to emphasise the location of shop entrances for people with visual impairment. This can be done through the use of colour and textural contrast, particularly on doors and at entrances and underfoot to emphasise the change from pavement to shopfloor.

**3.3.1.32** Aluminium is a modern material that comes in a variety of powder-coated finishes which may be acceptable as a cheap alternative to steel where a contemporary design is appropriate. Natural and some forms of anodised aluminium weather badly and are not acceptable for shopfront frames, doors or windows.

**3.3.1.33** Colour can be used to emphasise important elements of the design to reinforce certain aspects and to pick up details such as mouldings and lettering.

## Canopies/Blinds

**3.3.1.34** The purpose of canopies/blinds should be to provide weather protection to shoppers and shop windows. They can be lively additions to the streetscene provided that they are designed as an integral part of the shopfront and are confined to it. Canopies/blinds should not act as a permanent and prominent substitute for a fascia or projecting sign.

**3.3.1.35** Care should be taken with canopies/blinds to ensure that their size, shape and position are compatible with the character of the building. Architectural details should not be obscured when canopies/blinds are installed. The colour and materials should be consistent with or complementary to the materials of the shopfront and building.

**3.3.1.36** Continental 'Dutch' Canopies and other canopies using a 'fan' or folding supports are not traditional and can be very obtrusive both when open and retracted. They are considered inappropriate and will be resisted.

**3.3.1.37** Straight Canvas Canopies may be appropriate. Fully retractable roller blinds when well designed and positioned can enhance a traditional shopfront. It is essential that the blind box is incorporated into the shopfront design and not simply applied. Retracting blinds should always retract fully into the fascia and should provide safe and adequate ground clearance (minimum 2.4 m or 7 ft, 9 ins above ground level).

**3.3.1.38** Fitting and Positioning of canopies/blinds is important and the following points should be noted:

- Roller blinds must be retracted into a 'blind box' fitted flush with the fascia. Drawn sections will be required with an application.
- Blinds should usually cover the whole width of a shopfront, and should usually be the same width as the fascia.
- Blinds will not be permitted over doors alone or upper storey or basement windows.
- All blinds/canopies should clear the footpath by a minimum of 2.4 m (7 ft, 9 ins), and there should be a minimum of 450mm (18 ins) between the kerb edge and outermost edge of the canopy.
- Blinds should not interfere with the visibility of traffic signals and signs.
- Blind supports should not interfere with or detract from the appearance of a shopfront.

**3.3.1.39** Materials and Colour should be appropriate to the design of the shopfront. Glossy plastic and other 'wet look' materials are inappropriate, particularly on traditional shopfronts and should be avoided. Canvas is the preferred material. Colours should match or tone with the fascia and garish colours should be avoided.

**3.3.1.40** Lettering should be kept to a minimum and should not dominate the canopy. The style of lettering should co-ordinate with the design of the whole shopfront, especially the fascia sign.

## Security

**3.3.1.41** Security shutters are a particular problem in shopping streets, where they can introduce an inhospitable atmosphere after dark and detract from the appearance of fine buildings and shopfronts. Internal lighting can be used at night to

add to the feeling of security in a shopping area to reduce the impact of crime. Solid shutters prevent the opportunity for passive surveillance and attract graffiti.

**3.3.1.42** Should some form of shopfront security be considered necessary, the following may be acceptable. In any case we recommend that you discuss with Council Officers your shopfront security needs.

**Security Glass** is an ideal solution with no detrimental effect on the appearance of a shop. Toughened and laminated glass can also give very high levels of security and has the capacity to remain intact when broken. There is a wide range of products available from standard 7mm (or 1/3 ins) laminated glass to bullet proof glass.

**Internal Shutters** require no external additions to the shopfront, in particular the open link grille type, that allows a clear view into the shop and give an open appearance from the street.

**External Shutters** are not acceptable in most parts of the Borough, but if used must still enable the window display to be viewed. The appearance of these must be appropriate to the character and design of the shop. In such cases the shutter box housing should always be integrated within the shopfront (i.e behind the fascia) or be recessed and flush with the shopfront. Shutter guides should either be removable or integrated into the shopfront design and colour coated to match. A strong case can be made for the use of traditional timber shutters that can be removed completely. These should be retained where they currently exist.

**Burglar Alarms** while often necessary should be sited as unobtrusively as possible. Arbitrary positioning of alarms should be avoided. Alarms are best incorporated on

centre lines between windows, centred below the windows of the first floor or on the soffits of recessed doorways. They should never be located on architectural features such as consoles or pilasters.

## Signs

**3.3.1.43** Shop signs can either 'clutter' or add richness and variety to the streetscene depending on their position, design and quantity.

**3.3.1.44** Fascia signs are the most obvious sign and feature of a shopfront. Their role in the framework of traditional shopfronts is explained in Section 3.3.1a (i) of this Design Guide. However, in more recent times, there has been much variation in the style, dimensions, visual content, lettering style and illumination of fascia signs. This has led to the installation of some fascia signs that appear to be designed in isolation of the building and/or streetscene in which they are located.

**3.3.1.45** Fascia signs should avoid the use of large areas of acrylic or other shiny materials. On traditional shopfronts, painted timber fascias are the most appropriate with either painted lettering or applied individual letters of another material.

**3.3.1.46** The content of fascia signs should be kept to a minimum. A fascia should state only the name of the trader, and street number. If necessary the nature of the trade can also be indicated. Refer to Sections 3.3.1a (i) Fascias and 3.3.1e Lettering for further relevant guidance.

## Signage on Glazing

**3.3.1.47** Large areas of glazing can be a useful location for shop signs, which can be painted or etched onto the internal surface of the windows. Signage might also be placed behind the glass. These techniques may be particularly suited to frontages that

have an architectural form that do not lend themselves to the attachment of large external signs or fascias. However, large areas of advertising or painting behind glass can stifle a frontage.

**3.3.1.48** However, excessive signage on windows can make them look cluttered, especially when combined with additional advertisements and posters. Furthermore, shoppers can be reluctant to enter a shop when they cannot see in. Therefore there is also a commercial logic to keep windows uncluttered.

### Projecting or Hanging Signs

**3.3.1.49** Projecting or hanging signs should be simple and limited to the name of the shop or a graphic indication of the type of shop. In conservation areas or on listed buildings, projecting box signs are unsuitable and will be resisted. Non-internally illuminated hanging signs are preferred for their traditional appearance and simplicity.

**3.3.1.50** For projecting and hanging signs, the following criteria should be adhered to:

- No more than one projecting sign per shopfront.
- Hanging signs should be located below the level of the first floor window sill and in such a position as not to damage or obscure corbels or other architectural details.
- Signs to co-ordinate with the colour scheme and lettering styles of the overall shopfront design.
- The maximum size should generally be 600 x 400mm (24 x 16 ins), but a smaller sign may be required.

- Signs should provide at least 2.4m (7 ft, 9 ins) clearance from ground level.
- Hanging signs should not project more than 1.2m (4ft) from the face of the shopfront
- Signs should be located preferably at fascia level and should not obscure architectural details.

### Illuminated Signs

**3.3.1.51** A well designed and lit window display is a very effective method of advertising as well as providing a positive contribution to the street scene at night. On traditional shopfronts, illuminated fascias and projecting signs can be out of character, in particular illuminated box fascias or projecting signs will be resisted.

**3.3.1.52** Illuminated individual letters are a more appropriate alternative.

**3.3.1.53** In all cases, illumination should be treated as an integrated part of the overall design of the shopfront and not merely a means of highlighting an advertisement.

**3.3.1.54** Illuminated fascias and signs where appropriate, should present a neat appearance during daylight hours with all switchgear and wiring properly concealed.

**3.3.1.55** Illumination should be appropriate to the context and general character of the street as well as being discreetly sited on the building itself. The intensity of illumination should allow the sign to be easily read but not cause a distracting glare. Shop signs do not need special illumination should a sufficient level of street lighting and light from within the shop window display be achieved.

**3.3.1.56** In situations where there are insufficient levels of street lighting and illumination may be appropriate for signage on fascias, halo lighting and external illumination are the preferred methods. The location of external lighting units should not result in the introduction of clutter. Such lighting should be fixed to the fascia (not the building) and be painted to match the fascia and/or be complementary to the materials of the shopfront.. In instances where a parade of shops have been designed to have fascia-free signage (such as along stretches of Kensington High Street) this should be respected, and signage on such fascias will be resisted.

**3.3.1.57** The Council will not permit the illumination of signs that cannot be achieved in a manner which is generally in accordance with the design principles set out in Section 3.1 of this document. Illumination should not be designed or located to result in confusion with traffic signals.

**3.3.1.58** It must also be remembered that many retail areas within the Borough are also residential and therefore a less intrusive approach to illumination is essential.

### **Corporate Sign Styles**

**3.3.1.59** Company logos, signs and standard shopfront designs are not often suitable installations for traditional shopfronts, particularly those within listed buildings and within buildings in conservation areas.

**3.3.1.60** The overall character and qualities of buildings within the Borough are more important than achieving uniformity of design or establishing a 'corporate house style'. Such stores need to co-operate in modifying their standard 'corporate'

lettering or signage, or adapt their standard shopfront designs to ensure the integrity of the shopfront, building and streetscene are maintained and enhanced.

### Shopfront Forecourts

**3.3.1.61** The forecourt of shopfronts should be well maintained and finished with appropriate materials that complement the paving material of the street and allow for the safe passage of pedestrians over the area. Where a shopfront is being replaced, the Council will seek improvements to the forecourt in order to ensure the quality of the Borough's public realm is maintained to a very high standard.

### 3.3.2 Shopfronts in Recent Buildings

**3.3.2.1** Nearly all new shopfronts on recent buildings (most buildings after 1945) and in new buildings should be of contemporary design. It is inappropriate to consider a traditional or period shopfront design from a bygone age on a recent building or in most new-build developments.

**3.3.2.2** Exceptionally, if a new building is designed as a reproduction or pastiche of an older period character, the shopfront element of the new building should also be in keeping with that older character.

**3.3.2.3** The design guidance set out in Sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.3.4 and 3.4 should still be followed where applicable. In addition, contemporary shopfronts should be designed so that they substantially meet the shopfront design principles. A degree of flexibility is permitted regarding contemporary shopfronts, however it is advisable for applicants and designers to read the contents of this Design Guide to understand the sensitivities of shopfront design and appreciate the Council's position on appropriate design.

### 3.3.3 ACCESS

**3.3.3.1** Access is an issue which can affect everybody. While it may not be possible to make every shopfront accessible and usable by every person, every effort should be made to allow as many people as possible to participate in our urban environment.

**3.3.3.2** The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Supplementary Planning Document: Access Design Guide Adopted 2010 provides more detailed guidance on how an inclusive and accessible environment within the Borough can be achieved. This document should be read in the context of accessibility considerations for new shopfronts and alterations to shopfronts. Relevant specialist advice should be sought when available.

**3.3.3.3** It must be remembered that under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, there is a requirement to remove, where ever reasonably practical any barrier to access.

**3.3.3.4** The following accessibility considerations are necessary and should be considered alongside the aesthetic and conservation advice given elsewhere in this document.

- A new shop front should have level or ramped access.
- The door width for a new shop front should be a minimum of 1 m (3 ft, 3ins).
- Thresholds should be flush, if unavoidable they should be no higher than 15mm (0.6 ins) incorporating a chamfered design.

- The use of automatic doors is preferred since they are the most convenient form of access for all people.
- Fully glazed doors should have permanent and visible manifestation on the glass which contrasts from the background at 900mm (2 ft, 9 ins) and 1500mm (4 ft, 9 ins) above floor level so that the doors are not hazardous to visually impaired people.
- Door handles should contrast from the door and should be easy to grasp.
- New shopfronts should have clear signage.
- They should also have good lighting, particularly around the door/s.

**3.3.3.4** Changes of level at entrances should be avoided, but where unavoidable an internal ramp should be provided:

- Shops which have a change in level of under 180mm (7 ins) from pavement to shop floor surface can often incorporate ramped access within the shop.
- Exceptions preventing a ramped area to be created may include the presence of structural beams, floor slabs, socket outlets or basement lights or restricted floor areas or layout. For specific detailed design guidance about internal ramps for shopfronts see the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Supplementary Planning Document: Access Design Guide adopted 2010.

Other measures to improve accessibility when step-free access cannot be provided:

- highlighting steps
- providing handrail/s or grab rails by steps
- decreasing the weight of doors

- ideally, an existing shopfront should have a door width of at least 800mm (2 ft, 6 ins).

# 4

## How to Approach Shopfront Design

**4.0.1** Ensuring quality design outcomes requires a good understanding of your existing shopfront or future shopfront, its context and unique characteristics. Section 3 of this document provides guidance on the types of considerations that should take place for the restoration, modification and construction of any shopfront. It also sets out the Council's expectations in relation to shopfronts.

**4.0.2** This section provides information on how to approach the task of shopfront design as well as tips for putting together a shopfront application. The following outlines the key steps and considerations for successful shopfront design.

### 4.1 A NEW SHOPFRONT?

**4.1.1** Before deciding to replace an existing shopfront it is worth considering carefully why a new shopfront (replacement) is necessary. The most likely reasons may be:

- The present shopfront is in a poor state of repair.
- A higher quality shopfront is required to improve the look of your business.
- A change in retail use that requires a different frontage - for example a change from a betting shop to a flower shop where more display area is required, or from a greengrocers to a jewellery store where more security is needed.

**4.1.2** If the existing shopfront is a distinctive and well designed one that has fallen into disrepair, then repair work should be all that is required. This is almost always the case with timber shopfronts and repair work may be less expensive than replacement.

**4.1.3** You may also be designing a completely new shopfront, (i.e in a new build or where you are not replacing any existing shopfront). In this regard, the following sections are still directly relevant for advice on how to approach this task.

## **4.2 HOW TO APPRAISE YOUR SHOPFRONT**

**4.2.1** The first step in designing a shopfront is to make a careful appraisal of the premises. This should include understanding the existing shopfront, and/or the rest of the building to which it is attached and the context of the building. The following list of questions should assist with appraising your shopfront before deciding on the next steps of designing, altering or replacing a shopfront. They will also help you address the first three shopfront principles described in Section 3.1 of this document, and form the basis of your Design and Access Statement.

### **Streetscene and Local Context**

- 1.** What is the rhythm of the street elevation in which the shopfront will be located?
- 2.** Is there a consistent pattern to the shopfronts of adjoining buildings?
- 3.** What are the materials and colours used in the local buildings?
- 4.** How would a new shopfront fit in with the streetscene?

## The Building as a Whole

1. What are the qualities and proportions of the rest of the building?
2. Is there a particular architectural style?
3. What materials are used?
4. How well does the existing shopfront fit with the rest of the building?

## The Existing Shopfront

1. What is the style or character of the existing shopfront?
2. What are the strongest features of the existing shopfront?
3. Is the current shopfront Listed or in a Conservation Area?
4. Can the existing shopfront be repaired?
5. Do the elements of the architectural surround, i.e. pilasters, corbels, cornice, frieze, stallriser survive?
6. What is the proposed use of the shop and is the shopfront appropriate?
7. Does the shopfront allow access for all users in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005?

The above questions will help focus what you are trying to achieve with your new shopfront and the types of considerations that will help inform your shopfront design.

These questions will also provide a good starting point for discussions with Council Officers. Taking photos of the existing shopfront and some images of early ideas or shopfronts that you like will also assist.

### 4.3 A SUMMARY OF WHAT TO DO

The flowchart on the following page summarises the steps and actions that should take place in the shopfront improvement process.

### *Shopfront Improvement Process Image*

#### **4.4 WHAT DRAWINGS/ INFORMATION DO I NEED TO PROVIDE?**

**4.4.1** The type of information required will differ between initial discussions with Council Officers and the submitted package of drawings and details for planning approval. In addition more detailed information may be requested in relation to more sensitive shopfronts and buildings (particularly those within Listed Buildings).

**4.4.2** As a guide, we suggest that you provide the following:

- a site plan to scale with the site outlined
- an existing elevation of the shopfront and the building in which it is located, together with adjoining properties
- a proposed elevation of the shopfront
- cross sections of the shopfront, showing its relationship with the parent building
- details (e.g. joinery, profiles, signs etc)
- information on materials, fittings and colours
- a design and access statement, including how access matters have been taken into account.

**4.4.3** Photographs of the existing shopfront and adjoining premises (unless you are designing for a new-build or there is no existing shopfront) along with photographs to

depict the 'look and feel' you would like to achieve with your shopfront to convey your ideas.

## **4.5 DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENTS**

**4.5.1** A Design and Access Statement should accompany all planning applications relating to shopfront alterations, removals and installation. An explanation of the design approach is important and how the design has addressed relevant issues relating to access. A description of whether other designs or material options were explored and/or rejected should be set out clearly.

## **4.6 SHOPFRONT GRANTS**

**4.6.1** From time-to-time as funds become available the Council may offer grants to improve shopfronts. The offer of these grants is usually targeted on particularly poor shopfronts which detract from the streetscene.

**4.6.2** If you are considering improvements to your shopfront and think you may be eligible for this grant, please contact the Council's Planning Information Office.

# 5

## Planning Policy and Approvals

**5.0.1** Most shopfront alterations will require planning permission. The following explains which approvals will apply to your application. All planning applications will be considered in terms of consistency with relevant planning policy. Those which relate specifically to shopfronts are set out in Section 5.2.

### 5.1 PLANNING APPROVALS

#### Planning Permission

**5.1.1** Most alterations to the exterior of a building and demolition of parts of buildings will require planning permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, including the construction of a new shopfront, the erection of an awning or a security screen, changes to the fascia and other similar proposals. The replacement of an existing shopfront is also deemed to be an alteration which requires an application for planning permission.

#### Listed Building Consent

**5.1.2** Where a shop forms part of a listed building, Listed Building Consent is also required under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for even minor alterations to any part, including the shopfront and interior, even if these are later alterations.

## Conservation Area Consent

**5.1.3** Where a building lies within a conservation area, Conservation Area Consent is required under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for its substantial demolition. The removal of a shopfront is not considered as substantial demolition and Conservation Area Consent is unlikely to be required.

## Consent to Display an Advertisement

**5.1.4** Fascia signs, awnings and other external features of a shop often require consent under the Control of Advertisement regulations where they display the name of the shop or other advertising, particularly where they are illuminated.

## Further Information

**5.1.5** For application forms, information and advice, phone the Planning Information Office on: 020 7361 3012 or visit our website at: [www.rbkc.gov.uk](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk)

### Note:

**5.1.6** In some instances alterations to shopfronts occur prior to or without obtaining the necessary approvals. Where inadequate works are carried out, reinstatement of the original design or approved alterations will be rigorously enforced.

**5.1.7** Unauthorised works to a Listed Building might lead to prosecution. It is always advisable to discuss proposals at the earliest stage!

## 5.2 PLANNING POLICY

### 5.2.1 Unitary Development Plan (as amended September 2007)

**5.2.1.1** The Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) has been superseded by the adopted Core Strategy. However, there are some policies which have been saved and specifically cover shopfront design matters. These are:

- CD 72, CD73, CD74, and CD77;

## **5.2.2 Adopted Core Strategy (8<sup>th</sup> December 2010)**

**5.2.2.1** The adopted Core Strategy contains relevant policy for shopfronts in the 'Renewing the Legacy' chapter, within which Policies CL2(n) and (o) relate specifically to shopfronts.

**5.2.2.2** The relevant policies in the adopted Core Strategy relating to advertisements and signage are Policies CR4 (e) and (f). These are relevant in relation to shopfront design.

**5.2.2.3** These policies have been identified by the adopted Core Strategy as imperative to shopfronts within the Borough, to which the aspects set out in this document are supplementary.

## **5.2.3 Access Design Guide SPD adopted 2010**

**5.2.3.1** The Access SPD was adopted on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2010 and seeks to ensure that access for all, or as many as possible is essential to the commercial and social integrity of shopfronts, high streets and shopping parades. This document should be referred to specifically for access considerations and design specifications in relation to access needs.

## 5.2.4 Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Area-Specific Shopfront Design Guides

5.2.4.1 There exist a small number of area-specific Shopfront Design Guides. These can be used to supplement the Borough-wide guidance covered in this document. Area-specific shopfront design guides have been prepared for:

- Portobello Road
- Kensington High Street

In addition, there may be shopfront design guidance contained in the relevant Conservation Area Proposals Statement (CAPS). The CAPS should be referred to where applicable and can be found on the RBKC website.